LIVE!

Pursuing the party line.

A-BOMB A-GO-GO . . .

GLASTONBURY CND FESTIVAL

I ADMIT, I was tempted. But really, it doesn't take a great and visionary genius to dredge up a dose of cynicism for the ritual, and self-imposed ravages of the festival phenomenon. No argument through, that the summer season of grass, both tramped and inhaled, is the ultimate anthropologist's paradise. It's a spectacle for sure. Me, I'm your central-heating and modern sanitation type through and through, but people who should know mentioned figures like 40,000 tickets sold, and at least another half-dozen triple-zeros queuing back through the surrounding country lanes, quite prepared to sacrifice footwear and decaying motors to the early Glastonbury mud.

Stretching out across the hillsides in a good half-mile radius, there are tents and tents and tents. And straining the sides of these tents are citizens with a million different motivations.

A fest is a fest, an underlined date in the social calender, primarily useful for the speedy consumption of giant slabs of specially-purchased hash and the scope to shed all semblance of self-control, unworried by normal social niceties, the Somersetian Bill, the bank-manager or the boss. For this lot, it's one big escape.

Then there are healthy Habitat perennials of at least ten years, who take note of the humanist cause, easily accommodated within their contemporary liberalism, and are now initiating their dungeree'd toddlers into the desirable world of social-living. Yeah, I laugh about them too, but look, they came, and next week they might be annoying the hell out of their neighbours and local MP.

We've got the social-service, law-centre mob. The institutionalised product of what's left of State-absorbtion of the peoples'-rights-and-permissiveness 'problem', from *that* decade. The one which dominates all my observations, even though I wasn't there. A few post-punk politicised youth are around, disappointed by A Certain Radio's non-appearance, but who drank and larked enough to still be glad they came. And, requiring no introduction, hail the terminal hippies; the out and out bomb-banners; and the permanently scrambled freaks. There will always be the paisley pill-popping freaks.

To a screaming semi-armchair red sceptic, (me), the great catch-all CND umbrella, and the exhausting question of music's precise point in the maze of political activity run free as a squashy nudist through the Fayre's crowded calm.

What use *are* a pleasure-seeking rabble from assorted 'alternative' corners, against the monied meglomaniacs? 'Streuth, it'll take all we've got to hold on to our breath amidst lethal fallout from the site's devastating toilets. Limited range germ warfare, anyone?

What *can* this gathering mean or do? Apart from a symbolic value firmly contained within the prescribed parameters of a 'free' society, this event, where music and its emotive powers play a crucial part, must try to strengthen passions already stirred. At enormous personal risk, let's hope for some genuinely lifted spirits. That's what I'm testing this whole business for. Hmm. We'll see. It's bloody wet out there.

—D.H.

Warrior charge. Aswad see a vision of the promised land.

. . . AT THE MUD CLUB

AFFILIATED MEMBERS: DAVE HILL, AMRIK RAI (WORDS); DAVID CORIO (PICS)

SATURDAY

IT'S AROUND four o'clock, and in the backstage enclosure, officials are twitching about and wagging fingers at the cameramen and hacks. A metallic blue Ford Granada 2.8, registration number not many digits from NOG 978X, pulls up behind the stage. The untidy bald patch of George Ivan Morrison can be plainly seen through the rear window.

"He's too pissed to get out of the car," someone had said. Not quite true. the plump Irish soul singer, without offering a single glance, steps out and climbs the stairs, with the look of a recalcitrant husband sneaking off to the pub.

Van Morrison didn't have a single word for the masses who streamed from their campsites to watch. Secure within a sufficiently economical and sensitive band, he let his songs and voice communicate for themselves, and gradually, almost grudgingly, he built a truly moving, 80-minute set.

The music's spiritual scent, made pungent by three gospel-drenched backing singers, boosted Van Morrison's air of a man totally absorbed inside himself. He looked weary and sour, but he sang for keeps. He was that sulky, but in moments he was that good.

Morrison received plenty of money for this appearance, whereas Jackson Browne asked for none. Nobody knows if he gives a damn about the Bomb. He closed with a chilling 'Gloria', and some people jumped on the Granada as his chauffeur took him home.

There were quite a lot of gripes about the wobbly organisation of bands today. Only unbilled Roy Harper had preceded Morrison, and no-one knew what was coming next. This didn't prevent the afternoon providing the best, most apt entertainment I saw in my two full days.

The unfailingly inspiring E. P. Thompson gave a typically succinct, clear-sighted speech which urged this ungainly movement to learn self-confidence, and explained the whole Bomb business within a wide social and political context without being boring at all.

Aswad, who next took the stage, simply were the best thing I saw. So many of their records seem mundane, but today, the vitamin-count, and sense of touch, showed what a magnificent group they can be. for just over an hour, my myriad misgivings about the whole Rasta palaver evaporated, as Brinsley Dan warbled and hopped. I laughed like a madman as an Aswad guitarist played a solo with his teeth, while the others fell about. I skipped stupidly for five extra minutes, still fired by 'Warrior Charge'. Now *that* was real inspiration. And no artificial aids at all.

I forgot to say that Saturday was dry. Maybe the fleet of rescue bulldozers won't be needed in the graveyard car-parks after all. Still, it's the same to the fest-fiends who collect for the stock open-air r 'n' b of The Blues Band. Desperate to escape Paul Jones' terrifying orange trousers, I retreat to the guest-pass watering hole. Someone mumbles vaguely about Ekome, and sure enough, here they come. The joyous energy of Bristol's exponents of West African percussion and dance won favour with the ethnic culture-vultures, whose representation is, of course, large.

Elome's drums escorted my companion and I's struggle up hill, into the night, a safe distance from Sad Cafe. We're in a wonderland of wood-smoke and torch-light, and pass a flailing dervish, deep in the grip of the dayglo unknown. If someone did shove The Button right now, it'd probably make his night.

—D.H.

Puma style.

SUNDAY

THE FAINT BEAT which reaches me and David C., arriving culture - shocked from a peek at The Other Festival (the free one at Stonehenge), is alas the last one that Talisman will play. Shit! And then. Oh yeah, I know that compere's crooning tones! It's Pete Drummond! Remember *Sounds Of The* (Really Amazing) *Seventies?* Maybe Mr Drummond's presence is symbolic of a failing of the Fayre in this, its 11th year. It *is* still too musically par for the festival course.

We've seen the odd pocket of punks, and yesterday we spotted an incongruous handful of mods. But there's not much to tempt the great mass of mods and punks down here, and they don't have eight or nine quid to spend on altruism alone. A huge, and crucial audience has been completely missed.

From my angle this is the least promising day of all three. I'm halfway down the hill, when here come The Climax Blues Band, who are well - enough liked (mind you, everyone gets an encore round here) but scarcely sharpen the kind of teeth which a popular cause like CND must nurture if ever there's a crunch. O.K.

Clearly, here's a chance to investigate the pastoral traders and their sprawl of marquees and stalls. The goods for sale are of two main types. One: post-hippie paraphernalia, and two: what we'll call Alleged Food. The first is mostly drawn direct from pricey Camden Market, and doesn't improve with travel. The second (with honourable exceptions) is generally of burnt brown hue, and extremely anti-social.

Other facilities, however, seem fine, with plenty of things for the many 'free - expression' nippers to smash into bits.

The illicit chemical trade is kept strictly underground. But, of course, there's plenty of 'casual' types offering scorched nostrils, bloodshot eyes, or a lurid afternoon of self-discovery, in quantities to suit.

Healthier altogether are The Chieftains, who look like everybody's favourite uncles at a family do, and perform with all the emotion, self-effacement, good-humour and skill expected. I'm an utter philistine when it comes to Irish music, but I know how it improves an evening's drinking in certain North London bars. The Chieftains, handling unsuitable circumstances with confidence and charm, proved that pipes, harps and fiddles can score equally well in a whopping great field. The game punters loved them. They were by miles the best thing I saw today.

Dapper little Jackson Browne, today's primary star, is ever so nice, and grins cutely at all the gawping folk backstage. A figurehead of No-Nukes America, our man seems thoroughly stoned, desperately keen to please, and woos the audience with intimate tidbits about his backing band's various nicknames. I'm concerned actually, for Jackson's men. Their eyes are wide open, but surely they can't be *awake.*

Jackson does a good deal of rather vacant rambling between songs. I believe he is unimpeachably sincere, but his dreamy confessional poetry and stale country rock is unlikely to steel any resolve. Dissolve it more like. Most worrying of all, and for all his protesting credentials, he behaves like a bloke who can be comfortably talked into believing *anything at all.*

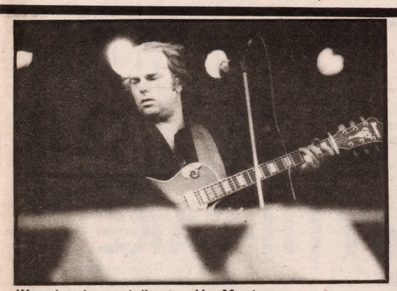
So, leaving gentle Jackson to his ovations, I sacrifice seeing nice Judi Tzuke ("Please! No close-up shots! My spots are terrible at the moment.") and hardened campaigner Richie Havens, in order to compile this report.

Glastonbury lacks balance, and musn't neglect its enormous scope. And it is a bit *too* dopey for me. So what's new? These last two days were designed for sloth I suppose and, face it . . . The People Came In Droves.

I achieved my aim. I got worked up. Aswad saw to that. Let's hope the rest of 'em did too. And Now. I'm gonna lie down.

—D.H.

Chieftain chic.



Warm love in a cool climate ... Van Morrison.

FEAR AND LOATHING

IT WAS raining in Glastonbury as the festival site zoomed into blurred focus, radiating all the mystical power of a giant sized cowpat. Such is the disruption of nature by this indiscriminate train of metropolitan exodus that even the fair weather gods have dismissed the protestors' prayers and sided with granny Mags, even the passing cows glare balefully at this extraneous growth on their place of excretion.

It's all for a good cause, of course, but when it rains like it poured at Glastonbury, any notion of protest is systematically drowned in an all-consuming quicksand. The ghost of demonstration past, a towering stegosaurus, slid solemnly through the psychedelic swamp with a mocking sneer on the sodden proceedings posing as rebellion.

All it saw was wellied wallies stranded like beached whales in ritualistic death throes; an all balls-out plunge into the depths of a mysterioso sewer,

Glastonbury is a time to pepper speech with antiquated cliches and shoot up some heavy amnesia. A time to get synched out of reality and have a stroboscopic blast, Yeah, but what about nuclear war? Hang loose mother goose, it's just a gas.

Glastonbury is an exaltation of flower power and mud media, rebel rebels, bitch bitching in the dour shower. Glastonbury's a million miles away from planet earth soaring on drugs and drowning in mud. Mud everywhere, and rain, and a million different shades of mud everywhere.

There's a depression over Glastonbury — the weather man says.

Funkapolitan slipped funky discs in the mud, 'There It Is Again' or 'Singing In The Rain'. As the time goes by and the storm gets darker, as the time stands still and the crowd gets thinner. Rappateer Kadir posed with an uncle Ronnie mask for 'War': at least someone remembered what we're here for.

Black Uhuru came on tuff style to pitch the jugs of scrumpy, and rows of umbrellas, into an absurd orgy of mud-splash and rain-dance. Slick Sly's drums and shaky Spear's bass pressed against the elemental fury in a harder reggae thrust. Puma released the locks in a flailing symbolism of unity, forging the trail for a delicate alliance with the dirty urchins shivering in the rainy cold.

Uhuru came the closest to distilling any sense of conviction, but failed simpy because they were a band doing a job...and Glastonbury needed so much more.

In almost total darkness John Cooper Clarke paraded his lurid purple jacket to the dancing video cameras and sang (yes, he sang) and danced (well almost) the blues away.

With the number of blues he'd got through, you couldn't help but lose somehow. 'Beasly Street' to music and singalonga Johnny Clarke dispelled any illusions I may have suffered from. It's true, he can't sing.

Entertainment? That was it mate. Randy California, a man only just in his tree, polished the final hackneyed twang. There's nothing worse than leading an old axehead to choke the last breath from a dying occasion.

It's got to be said. The only people who enjoyed any sense of satisfaction , or felt that they personally had contributed something worthwhile at the openeing day of the Glastonbury Festival were the ones who weren't there...and the ones that weren't really there.

— A.R.

In the end ... there was mud.